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# Congress of the United States

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October 28, 2002

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The Honorable John D. Ashcroft  
Attorney General of the United States  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Mr. Attorney General:

I am writing in reference to reports that someone is calling Florida voters to urge them to submit an absentee ballot past the general election deadline. In light of the ongoing electoral problems in Florida, I would urge the Department of Justice to open an investigation into these allegations as a possible violation of the Voting Rights Act.

As you may be aware, the Voting Rights Act contains several provisions designed to preserve the integrity of the ballot process. For instance, sections 1971(b) and 1973i(b) of title 42, United States Code, prohibit any person from intimidating, threatening, or coercing another from voting for or not voting for a candidate for Federal office. Nothing could be more anti-democratic and anti-American than preventing a qualified voter from submitting a legal ballot.

Unfortunately, abuses of this basic American right continue to take place in the 21st century. Bob Poe, Chair of the Florida Democratic Party, has stated he received a phone call from someone who asked him to submit an absentee ballot on November 10th. Knowing that the election was on November 5th, Mr. Poe asked why he should wait an extra five days and have his ballot discarded as tardy. The caller apparently maintained November 10th as the ballot deadline and further claimed he was calling on behalf of the campaign of Bill McBride, the Democratic candidate for the governor of Florida. Mr. Poe confirmed with the McBride campaign that it was making no such phone calls. While state law may govern the Florida governor's race, what raises this issue to the Federal level is the fact that any such absentee ballot would include races for the U.S. House of Representatives.

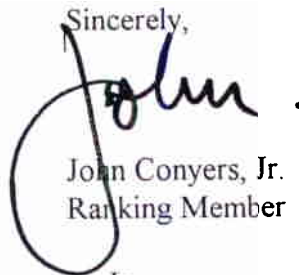
I understand the Department is designating one Assistant U.S. Attorney in every district to be a District Election Officer in charge of investigating voting rights abuses. In light of this

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heightened attention on our election processes, I believe a Federal investigation of the Florida phone call would be time well spent by the appropriate U.S. Attorney.

For these reasons, I would urge an immediate investigation into this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John", with a large, stylized loop on the left side. A period follows the signature.

John Conyers, Jr.  
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.  
Chairman  
Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Daniel J. Bryant  
Assistant Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice